

allow Members on both sides to offer amendments which could pass and could improve the underlying bill.

It goes without saying that this bill did not go through regular order, which is nothing more than saying it didn't go through the normal committee process. But the benefit of going through the normal committee process is that both majority and minority Members get a chance to participate in writing a bill in the committee even before it comes to the floor.

So now that we have a bill that was negotiated and which, I suppose, at some point we will see in the light of day, but one that was negotiated by only a small fraction of Senators, it is even more critical that we have an open amendment process.

As I said earlier, a transportation infrastructure bill ordinarily would go through an arduous process, through, I think, at least three standing committees—through the Banking Committee, through the Commerce Committee, and through the Environment and Public Works Committee. But that did not happen here.

The bipartisan group of Senators did find common ground among themselves, and now it is time for the full Senate to have the opportunity to offer changes that will improve this legislation and allow all Senators a chance to participate in shaping them.

Our friend, Senator PORTMAN, the Senator from Ohio, said the bipartisan group is committed to having a fair process that allows both sides an opportunity to amend the bill. Senator MCCONNELL has also called for a robust, bipartisan floor process. So I would encourage Senator SCHUMER, the floor leader, to accept amendments from Members of both sides of the aisle to strengthen the legislation and ensure that it meets the needs of our constituents.

There is no question that the roads and bridges across the country are in need of repair. Every year, the American Society of Civil Engineers evaluates the state of our infrastructure and issues a report card to let us know how we are doing.

Well, America is barely passing with a C-minus. Texas is faring slightly better than the rest of the class, with a C. But it is time, as you can tell, for us to invest in our roads and bridges and the ports and waterways that fuel our economy and the broadband that keeps us connected.

I have been disappointed that Senator SCHUMER has seen fit to try to force us to vote on a bill that does not yet exist in its entirety, but I hope we can now pump the brakes a little bit and take the time and care to evaluate the benefits and the costs of this legislation, and I hope that there will be an amendment process available to both sides of the aisle to ensure that our infrastructure investments are made fairly and they are paid for responsibly.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### REMEMBERING CARL LEVIN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I am sorry to begin my remarks today with a third Senate eulogy for this week alone.

Last evening, we received word that our former colleague from Michigan, Senator Carl Levin, passed away at the age of 87. Carl's fellow Michiganders elected and reelected him six times. He was the longest serving Senator from Michigan ever. His home State liked what they had in this passionate activist turned attorney, turned public servant. His dutiful, diligent, and detail-oriented approach led Senator Levin to build expertise and win respect across a huge range of issues.

The pinnacle of our colleague's career was his years atop the Senate Armed Services Committee. I certainly did not always reach the same conclusions that Carl did, but his independence, his genuine humble curiosity, and his affection for the men and women who wear the uniform were impossible to dispute.

He was earnest. He was solid, forthright, and devoted to the defense of our Nation in ways that he thought best.

I especially admired Carl's courageous, consistent defense of the Senate filibuster and the unique structures that define this institution. He never let short-term political facts cloud his long-term judgment in that crucial area.

I know all of our condolences go out to Barbara and the entire Levin family today and to all Senators, staff, and friends who will miss our colleague.

#### THE ECONOMY

Now, Mr. President, on a completely different matter, we learned yesterday that last quarter, our GDP finally regained its prepandemic level. It has taken about a year of economic growth just to recover back to where we started.

Obviously, we are still far below where our pre-COVID trajectory would have had us today. Before this 100-year pandemic, Republican policies had helped build the best economic moment for American workers in recent memory. Unemployment was at remarkable lows. Wages were on the rise. Pay was growing faster for workers toward the bottom of the income scale—actually faster than those at the top.

That was then. This is now. For the last several months, a different philosophy has guided our recovery. Our

Democratic friends believe in borrowing, spending, and taxing at dizzying rates. They want to engineer some kind of socialist recovery from the top down. So how is it going? Well, that GDP report that came out yesterday was actually a substantial miss. Our economy grew almost 25 percent slower than the experts had predicted—another economic disappointment.

Now, remember, this new administration and this Democratic Congress were set up for success unlike any other transition we had seen in our lifetimes. They inherited not one, not two, but three safe and effective vaccines that were spreading around the country. They inherited an economy that was raring to come back, thanks to five bipartisan rescue packages we passed last year.

But instead of helping the American people get back to normal, Democrats decided they wanted to build back bloated—build back bloated. They jammed through a massive \$2 trillion so-called COVID package that only spent about 1 percent on vaccinations and less than 10 percent on public health. The rest went to a litany—a literal litany—of inflationary liberal spending.

Now American families are paying the price: slower hiring than expected, slower growth than expected, a weaker comeback than expected. Their policies are sticking it to the middle-class families through higher prices at the grocery store, at the gas pump, at the hardware store, at the car dealership, in the housing market, and practically everywhere else that matters to families.

Employers large and small, down to Main Street shops and construction sites, are struggling to hire and turning down work because Democrats decided taxpayers should keep directly paying people to stay home. Our country is flooded with safe, effective, and free vaccines for anyone who wants one, but Democrats are still making small businesses bid against a special government handout that rewards, believe it or not, not working.

Our bipartisan work last year left our country primed and ready for a comeback summer, but it is becoming clearer and clearer that Democrats in the Capitol and down Pennsylvania Avenue pursued economic policies that have fumbled the handoff.

Now, in the days ahead, Democrats want to steamroll ahead with yet another reckless tax-and-spending spree: more untinged borrowing, printing, and spending; more welfare spending with no—listen to this—no work requirements; everything from amnesty to big chunks of the Green New Deal and historic tax hikes poured on top for good measure. This kind of reckless taxing-and-spending spree would make their last failed package look like a walk in the park, and the pain that families are already feeling would just be beginning.

## NOMINATION OF DAVID H. CHIPMAN

Mr. President, now on one final matter, the President has made an inexplicable choice in nominating David Chipman to head the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. This nominee has a long track record of open hostility to law-abiding Americans' Second Amendment rights. He is a loud, proud, would-be gun-grabber who has made it a personal mission to erode the Bill of Rights for the citizens of this country.

This is an especially awful time to be taking aim at Americans' right to keep and bear arms. Remember, as the political left has sought to vilify and defund the police across our country, homicides have, of course, surged. Last year's spike in the national murder rate was the steepest since, believe it or not, 1960.

So, as Democrats have made political war on the police, many citizens have started to think about self-protection. We have seen members of racial minority groups joining the parade of first-time gun owners in record numbers. But then Democrats don't like that either. Apparently, the left neither wants strong police forces, nor do they want Americans equipped for self-defense.

This nominee is unsuited enough for this job on policy merits, but somehow all this is just the tip of the iceberg of the concerns.

Mr. Chipman also comes with a distressing workplace reputation. Current and former ATF agents, once his colleagues, have described him as an "activist" and a "bully." Those are direct quotes. By one account, his policy views are "extreme" and his demeanor unsettling. I understand that just this week, even graver concerns have surfaced. According to one report, multiple ATF sources say there exists an internal complaint over racially insensitive comments allegedly made by the nominee in the workplace.

I don't expect that a Democratic President would pick somebody to run the ATF who will have our side of the aisle popping corks, but this is another level altogether.

Anyone who supports the Bill of Rights should oppose this nomination. There is no way this nominee is the best the Biden administration can do.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I rarely come to the floor to directly respond to speeches given by my colleagues. I normally like to use the Chamber to make my own arguments on their merits rather than to make arguments against specific colleagues.

But yesterday I listened to a speech by Senator CRUZ of Texas, and it was one of the most dangerous speeches that I have ever heard given on the Senate floor, and it deserves a response.

Now, I understand that Republicans don't want to talk about the economy. They don't want to talk about the fact that we have had more jobs added to the economy in the first 5 months of President Biden's term than any other first-term President. I know they don't want to talk about the rapid expansion of the economy that is happening.

I understand Republicans don't want to talk about what we are debating on the Senate floor right now, which is the biggest bipartisan investment in infrastructure in the history of the country.

And I also understand that the Senator from Texas doesn't like the new guidance announced this week by the CDC. And he is not alone. From what I can tell, a lot of Republicans here are upset, as are a lot of nonpolitical Americans. Nobody likes to wear a mask. Nobody likes that the new recommendation is that some Americans need to wear them. Again, I don't like wearing a mask. I hate it. My kids hate the masks more.

But here is what the CDC said. The CDC's scientists have been carefully following this dramatic increase in cases that we have seen all across the country as the Delta variant spreads, even through vaccinated people. First, we can't ignore this, the fact that there has been this huge increase in cases. The national 7-day average is triple what it was from a month ago. We are averaging 40,000 new cases a day.

This is a big problem, and it is overwhelming parts of our healthcare system. Now, I wish this weren't the case, but it requires us to think about adjusting policy.

Second, the CDC is looking at this new evidence that indicates that even fully vaccinated individuals who become infected with the Delta variant can carry the virus and transmit it to others, even if they don't get sick. Now, this latest development is important because it allows the Delta variant, the more contagious variant, to spread faster. Early information from the CDC shows that the Delta variant is as contagious as the chickenpox, more contagious than earlier strains of COVID.

And, remember, not every American today is vaccinated. For instance, my youngest son is 9 years old. He can't get vaccinated. If the evidence suggests that I can transmit the virus to him, even if my vaccine prevents me from getting really sick, then that matters.

Finally, with so many Americans still unvaccinated, the virus still has plenty of bodies in which to mutate. Right now, the good news is that we have got three authorized COVID-19 vaccines that are pretty effective against severe illness. But the worry is

that eventually the vaccine is going to mutate into a version of itself that is resistant to the current vaccines. And with so many Americans choosing to stay unvaccinated and evidence suggesting that vaccinated people who are infected with the Delta variant can transmit it to people who are unvaccinated, the CDC has concluded that, right now, we need to take additional steps to cut down on the pathways that the virus has to spread and keep mutating before it is too late, and we have a virus that our vaccines don't work against at all.

Now, what does the new guidance say? It recommends that fully vaccinated people wear a mask in public indoor settings, in places in the country where there are a lot of cases. And since most young kids aren't vaccinated, the CDC is also recommending that, when school opens, teachers and kids should wear masks.

That is the argument that the CDC is making. That is the evidence upon which they have issued their new guidance. And it is perfectly legitimate to contest the CDC's decision or the reasons that they gave for making the decision. It is OK for anybody in this body to disagree with the conclusions that they reach.

But that is not what Senator CRUZ did yesterday. He didn't come to the floor and argue against the merits of the CDC's argument. No. In fact, not once during the speech—and I watched the whole speech—did he ever reference the actual reasons for the CDC's new guidance, not once.

In fact, he claimed that the CDC offered no explanation. At one point, after mischaracterizing the CDC's announcement, he asked rhetorically why the CDC changed the guidance. "Who knows?" he said. Anyone who listened to that speech or, frankly, many other speeches that are being given by Republicans all across Capitol Hill this week would logically come to the conclusion that the CDC had offered not a single explanation for the new guidance.

Then, after creating the impression that the CDC didn't have any reasons for the new recommendation, the Senator from Texas announced that he had discovered the reason. He said that the real reason the CDC changed their guidance was because the CDC is "an arm of the Democratic National Committee" and that Democrats in Congress are "faithful little foot soldiers" of the CDC.

He offered no explanation as to why it would benefit Democrats politically or the DNC or the CDC to recommend mask wearing. He just simply claimed that the CDC was a political puppet of the DNC and the guidance was politically motivated.

The closest he came to a more detailed explanation of this claim was when he talked about the school guidance. There the Senator from Texas claimed, without any evidence, that the only reason the CDC made this decision was because it was demanded by